Is there anything better than when shelter dogs have their tongues out and goofy grins on their faces? The ones they get when they finish running from one end of the play yard to the other surrounded by their dog friends, or during a water break on a leisurely hike through the woods. These smiles are what we strive to achieve in all of our dog enrichment efforts.

Morning playgroups often become the highlight of a dog’s day during their stay at Rescue Village. An active session of running side-by-side, tail wagging, and engaging in play bows – what could be better?

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For the eleven years I’ve directed Rescue Village, I have taken perspective walks along the river in South Chagrin Reservation. In the fall, my favorite time of year, all is quiet along the meadows. It is early morning – the wild grasses are turning brown and the leaves are still gorgeous oranges and golds.

I knew every inch of these trails when my dog Turtleanne would swim in swollen rivers. She was undaunted by the roughest currents. Then there was Dubbie, who could not hear the sound of the waters, or anything else for that matter. Yet, his nose picked up scents and happiness was written all over his 15-year-old face. Next came Piper Peep, who only went so far as to poke the very tip of one paw into the Chagrin. Her fears were so many but this walk was an activity she loved.

When the edges of our memories fray, we often fill them in with color and light. Early on at Rescue Village friends said my optimism bordered on naiveté. I protested by saying, “If you have a vision and dream and you’re willing to work hard and never let go…you can climb even the highest mountains.” I may be a little slower in the step but it is this perspective and my walks by the river that keep me alive and well.

We have accomplished so much here at Rescue Village. For every animal saved I have probably walked 10,000 steps conjuring up visions of where to go next and what I would find around the bend. With every challenge, I have said to myself and to every animal that has crossed my path, “It is going to be okay.” For 99% of the time it was!

Now, I do not have a dog. But I just adopted a lovely 13-year-old cat named Sherman. She gives me love and all the peace I need and I give it right back. My walks along the river are solo now but I am never ever lonely, not ever.

Sincerely,

Hope Brustein, Executive Director
Who would have thought a cat named Walter would become king of the road and ruler of the Rescue Village walking trails? In May of this year, Walter was surrendered to Rescue Village as a stray cat found in Chagrin Falls. He arrived in very poor condition. Our clinic staff determined Walter was FIV positive and he would also need extensive dental and eye surgeries. Three surgeries and months of recovery later, Walter was finally cleared for adoption.

While he waited for his purrrfect match to come along, a stroller was donated to Rescue Village and our team had the clever idea to give Walter some extra enrichment as he grew more restless in his cage. Every day we would bring the stroller into our Adoptable Cat Pavilion and Walter would start meowing with excitement. Sometimes, he would jump right into the stroller from the top of his cage! Once securely zipped in, Walter enjoyed regular walks all along the Rescue Village walking trails. Walter was unafraid of dogs walking the trails or our feisty roosters crowing near the barn. Walter’s “ride” delighted us all! When he was finally adopted, we sent Walter home with his stroller so his new family could continue to walk him!

Rescued from a dark and damp basement with dozens of other Golden Retrievers, the first nine years of Diesel’s life were grim. Diesel’s past is long behind him now. We are happy to report that Diesel’s days have been much brighter and filled with plenty of love from his new family. Since Diesel’s adoption day, back in December of 2017, his adopters have been sending us regular reports of Diesel’s “golden days.”

A day in the life of Diesel includes rolling in the grass, camping trips, car rides, roaming the family farm and, of course, plenty of tennis balls and toys. He is affectionately called the “old man of the house” even though he continues to surprise his adopters every day with his playfulness and affection. We always look forward to these updates and hope that there are many more golden days in store for Diesel!
You don’t have to speak equine...
To know that cruelty and neglect causes pain and suffering

You don’t have to have spent time at a stable or racetrack...
To have empathy and appreciation for these wonderful animals

You don’t have to be an animal activist...
To support enforcing Ohio’s humane law statutes

all you have to be is HUMANE
The RV barn program, headquartered at Billie’s Barn (named after major funder Billie Howland Steffee), has saved 65 horses since 2005 when the barn was built. While we provide education and assistance to owners, our court certified humane agent has the authority, with a court issued warrant, to take animals into our protective custody if laws have been broken and, without intervention, they are acutely suffering or in danger of dying.

This is difficult work. It is not a given that a starving horse, for example, can be saved. But Rescue Village is willing to spend thousands of dollars (that will never be made up by adoption fees) on their care, rehabilitation, and rehoming. We are required to enforce the law and we believe all animals deserve our moral concern.

Geauga County is a center for the horse industry in Ohio. It is not surprising that, while most horse owners take decent care of their equines, there are a few owners who allow their horses to dangerously decline in health and well-being. Rescue Village works closely with qualified veterinarians to make medical evaluations. In fact, we encourage owners who are unable to properly care for their horses to contact Rescue Village for assistance before the situation becomes critical.

The myth that humane societies, like Rescue Village, save horses in order to sell them at a profit could not be farther from the truth. Rescue Village picks up the entire cost of humane law enforcement in Geauga County – we receive no government funding. We enforce the laws pertaining to dogs, cats, horses, and farm animals. The barn program exists to carry out this responsibility. You can imagine the heartbreak when a normally 1,100 pound horse comes to us weighing 800 pounds.

It takes months to successfully bring an abused or neglected horse back to health and even more time to rehabilitate and rehome them. Community members who donate to or volunteer with the barn program get tremendous satisfaction helping to bring dignity, better health, and safety to these animals. This, not financial gain, is the reward. Watching a horse regain his/her health, “brightness,” spirit, trust, playfulness, and movement is worth every dollar we spend. The cost of the RV barn program is approximately $120,000 annually. In 2017, we received $2,500 in adoption fees for all barn animals.

The RV barn program is a friend to the people, horses, and farm animals of Geauga County. This service continues with the support of the community. Ending cruelty and neglect – it is the law AND it is the right thing to do! We (and, most importantly, they) thank you.
Playgroup is the only time that they are off-leash and they get to just be dogs. I believe it helps them to deal with the stress of being in a shelter.

Chris Barris, Dog Volunteer

Whether it is raining, sunny and warm, or even in the bitter cold of winter, Rescue Village makes playgroups a priority. When conditions are so severe that we cannot safely allow animals to be outside for an extended period of time, we move things indoors and work with smaller groups of dogs in our community room. Last year, when the melting snow turned our play yard into a mud-pit, we upgraded its surface to small stones, thanks to Fairmount Santrol and Ames Trucking, so the pups could enjoy playtime in any weather conditions.

These dog parties are more than just a good time. The activity gives staff key information to help evaluate dogs’ behavior and personalities and this often boosts a dog’s résumé. Many adopters already have a dog in their home and want to make sure introducing a new family member will not cause any problems.

Playgroups aren’t the only way our dogs get the exercise they need. Our Get Fit with Fido hikes are a great opportunity for dogs to get out of the shelter and explore a local park on a leisurely “pack-walk.” And, of course, there are daily walks.

These hikes also help us learn more about each dog. Everyone who goes out on Get Fit with Fido receives a detailed report card when they return to the shelter. These report cards are included in the dog’s file and can really say a lot about how a dog does on car rides, what their behavior is like on a leash, and how they might act around other leashed dogs.

Shelter life can be stressful for a dog. These enrichment efforts not only keep our dogs healthy and happy, but they also help us learn more about each individual pup and help prepare them for their new life in a loving home. Our staff, volunteers, and the dogs all agree – a healthy dog is definitely a happy dog!
As long-time cat owners, we appreciate the way cats are treated at Rescue Village; they are cared for by wonderful staff and volunteers in clean, quiet, comfortable facilities. And very quickly they are placed in appropriate, loving forever homes. In fact, we adopted our newest cat just last October, after his brief five-day stay at Rescue Village.

Karen and Richard Spector
Hi! I’m Ripley the cat and I live outside. If you’re thinking I need a nice warm house with couches and air conditioning…stop right there! Definitely not on my wish list!

Yep, my home is around an old barn in Geauga County. I live with about 20 other guys and gals. We love a special meal of field mice but we depend on a nice person who leaves food for us.

I’ve heard that we get a lot of media coverage and we’re called “community cats.” Whatever! I’m not sure of my family tree. Sometimes I have flashes of having lived in a house overrun with other critters. Other times I’m almost sure I was born outside. A month ago, I felt like a lion, wild and feral.

If I took a selfie you would notice one of my ears is missing the tip. Nope, it wasn’t an accident. It happened the day I went to Rescue Village. I couldn’t resist the smell of wet food and went into a humane trap. From there I was driven to the shelter. There were lots of other cats just like me. And, boy oh boy, you could smell us a mile away.

The people talked to each other a lot. They called this day trip TNR, which means Trap, Neuter or Spay, Return to Field. The doc gave me something so I would not feel any pain. Hey, it was better than a vat of cat nip. Then it took a few minutes for a safe surgery that, ummm, either removed my testicles or my uterus (frankly, I have no idea which because I have no idea if I’m a boy or a girl cat). I recovered for a little while then went back to my “community.” But, I was feeling better by the next day. And, voila! No more kittens.

The docs, Meg and Page, and Lisa and Grace who work at Rescue Village are the best. They “get” me! And now I’m an expert about this humane way to prevent the birth of unwanted and homeless cats. Okay okay, those wouldn’t be my words. They gave me a script of what to say. Believe it or not, I want to be a regular writer for the Rescue Village Reporter!
Woofstock 2018 was a groovy success! This year's dog and family friendly festival took place on Sunday, September 16th at the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Field and welcomed people of all ages and their pups from far and wide to groove, play, and fundraise for homeless animals.

There were dozens of vendors selling all sorts of goodies, a few food trucks to keep our bellies full, and even some adoptable pups from Rescue Village and other local shelters who were lucky enough to find their forever homes.

Old favorites like the Annual Blessing of the Animals, Cool Canine Contests, and “Best Look” Contest judged by local celebrities united with new event features like Lucky Dog’s Interactive Lure Course, Youth Advocacy Day, and the Woofstock version of B-I-N-G-O to produce a positively doggone good time!

We hope to see everyone again next year!

This year’s Wet Nose 5K, held on August 5th at Orchard Hills Park, paid special tribute to a beloved volunteer and friend of Rescue Village who passed away recently. Sixteen-year-old Abby Bendis devoted herself to being a camp counselor for our youth summer camps and had a passion for all animals. She was also an avid runner and her family, her friends, and her cross-country team came together at this year’s race and ran to raise money for the animals of Rescue Village and, of course, for Abby.

At a special mile marker, we sent bubbles into the sky for every runner who passed that was running for Abby. There was also a banner at the finish and we gave out the first ever “Abby Bendis Award” to a runner who demonstrated the most solidarity and encouragement to fellow runners.

We wanted to send a special thank you to the Bendis family and to all of those who came to the race this year to run in honor of Abby. We had double the runners and raised more than ever for the animals of Rescue Village at this event.

“As Abby loved to run, and she truly enjoyed volunteering at Rescue Village. So, it meant a lot to my family and friends and to many Beachwood High School students and teachers to honor Abby’s memory at this year’s Wet Nose 5K.”

Todd Bendis, father of Abby Bendis and Rescue Village supporter
The critical role Rescue Village plays, not only locally, but also regionally and even nationally, to positively affect the most neglected animals is indisputable and immeasurable. I could not, and would not, attempt to imagine the unfortunate plight of our neediest of animals if Rescue Village did not serve this community.

Mitch Bowlus

Year-end is the time that we are especially grateful to our donors and friends who make our lifesaving possible. We hope that as you make your year-end gifts you will consider the animals at Rescue Village and how much they need your support.

Thank you to our generous sponsors who have supported our events and our lifesaving efforts all year round!

Foot x Foot, Paw x Paw
Presenting Sponsor: Julie A. Clayman, M.D.

Help a Horse Day
Bronze Sponsor: ESP Alternative LLC

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Wet Nose 5K
Silver: Village Veterinary Clinic

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Silver: Pet Palace
Silver: Village Veterinary Clinic
Silver: 90.3 WCPN

Annual Sponsors
Gold: Solon Manufacturing Company
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Bronze: Pawsome Pets

All donor listings and special thanks will now be available year round on our website!
Please see www.geaugahumane.org/tribute-listing for these lists.

Mark your calendars for #GivingTuesday! Last year, we raised over $30,000 in a single day! Can we beat that number this year? This year’s event falls on Tuesday, November 27. Stay tuned for more details!
“Through all the seasons of our lives, animals just brighten our days. You’re never too old or young to give and get unconditional love!”